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ABSTRACT

Public schools in Ohio are adopting whole language, literature-based curricula. As a result, teachers are using the public library more frequently, borrowing greater quantities of books and materials, and asking librarians to assume non-traditional roles such as that of curriculum planner and teacher. The purpose of this study was to examine how librarians view their changing roles, what lending procedures are in place to deal with greater demand for materials, and what materials and services are available to accommodate the whole language teacher. A questionnaire was mailed to 170 children's librarians employed in Ohio public libraries. The results of the study show that the role of the librarian is changing and that librarians welcome this change and view it as a positive one. Librarians are willing to take their skills and move beyond the walls of their library, are becoming knowledgeable about whole language, and are creating services to meet the needs of the whole language teacher. Librarians are attempting to solve the problem of serving the patron fairly while allowing whole language teachers to borrow the quantity of materials they need for their students. The survey instrument is included. (Contains 15 references.) (TMK)



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ASSESSING THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARIAN WITH THE WHOLE LANGUAGE TEACHER AS PATRON

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the Kent State University School of Library and Information Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Deborah W. Anderson

June, 1993

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction					
Backgroundl					
Purpose2					
Limitations3					
Terminology3					
Literature Review5					
Methodology7					
Results					
Survey Response8					
Statistical Results8					

Conclusion......18

Appendices......20

Notes.....22



Introduction

Background

"Any public librarian who still resists whole language should be warned: This phenomenon is not going away. who don't join the force soon may be left totally unprepared for the demand that is sure to come." As a children's librarian in a public library this researcher has found this statement to be true. The role of a children's librarian in a public library setting is changing as more and more teachers adopt a whole language, integrated, literature-based curriculum for their classrooms. A whole language approach to teaching uses "real" literature across the curriculum rather than textbooks. Reading and Language Arts are not taught as isolated, fragmented subjects, but are integrated with Math, Science, Social Studies, Music and Art. Teachers develop theme units based on books, authors or subjects. The theme or topic of the unit crosses all the disciplines; reading and writing are taught and learned in context. As a result teachers need great quantities of books, both fiction and informational. Teachers view the children's librarian as a children's literature expert. While this researcher has always helped children, parents and teachers find information and has helped them choose good literature to read for enjoyment, my role is expanding. This researcher has become an educator, a partner with teachers, rather than a disseminater of information. This



researcher has been asked to take part in activities that are very different from the traditional role of the librarian. These activities are as follows: Asked to help develop a core collection of literature that will be used in the classroom; gone into schools and have done programs on authors that the children are studying; gone to schools and read different versions of the same story as part of a folklore unit; spoke to a whole language reading class at the master's level on how to choose good literature, predictable books and quality nonfiction; brainstormed with teachers on possible themes for units and webbing ideas.

Because whole language is grounded in literature, teachers require great quantities of books and materials and they expect to be able to borrow the quantity they need, our borrowing policies are slowly changing in response to this need. One of the dilemmas that the library faces is that of providing books to teachers while still having available, sufficient amounts of books and materials to meet the needs of other patrons. In a attempt to serve both teachers and patrons the staff developed a big book collection with accompanying small books and classroom sets of juvenile fiction. While all these role changes are viewed with excitement, there are many unanswered questions and very little has been published about whole language from the public librarian's point of view.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine what other



libraries are doing in response to the greater demands that are being placed on them as more teachers and schools adopt a whole language philosophy. The purpose of the survey was to identify: (1) what services and materials librarians are offering to the whole language teacher, (2) whether or not they perceive changes in their role of librarian in response to requests from whole language teachers, (3) what lending procedures are in place to accommodate the increased demand for books and materials. It is hoped that the results of this study will help guide other librarians as they respond to the increased demands that whole language places on them and their libraries.

Limitations

The questionnaire was mailed to 170 children's public librarians in the state of Ohio. The questions on the survey were limited to the practices that are currently in place in Ohio public libraries and do not address what the librarian plans to do in the furture. The questionnaire did not address librarians' attitudes toward whole language teachers.

Terminology

For the purpose of this study the role of the librarian is defined as the activities she is engaged in as the result of a request from a whole language teacher, and the duties



she performs as part of her job description.

Whole language is a theory and philosophy of learning and literacy that recognizes that learning takes place from the whole to the part; that children learn more quickly in response to a real need; that language, reading and writing are learned by doing and not by studying about language, reading and writing. "Whole language uses a thematic approach, integrating the disciplines to present a complete body of knowledge." 2

Thematic units are the basic unit of study. They are different from traditional study units which might only cover one topic in one discipline. The subject or topic of a thematic unit crosses al. disciplines. For example: A teacher or her students decide to study outer space. Rather than just studying outer space in Science, the students in a whole language classroom would study outer space in Science, Math, Social Studies, Reading/Language Arts and possibly Health, Art, and Music. Rather than using only textbooks for this course of study, as has been tradition, "thematic studies in the whole language classroom are grounded in high-quality fiction, non-fiction, poetry and process writing. It is the literature that forms the framework for explorations into the content."

Literature-based reading uses "real" literature rather than controlled vocabulary basals and textbooks.

Predictable books are used by emergent readers because they are easily readable and offer the child immediate



success. Predictable books are those which "rhyme or are rhythmic in nature, include repetition or have a cumulative structure, have natural language flow, tell a meaningful story, and have quality illustrations that match the text."

Big books are just that. They are commercially produced trade books that have been enlarged to approximately 16 x 26 inches. Since they are large they are used by the whole class during shared reading. Accompanying small books are paperback copies of the same title of a particular big book. They are purchased for the whole class so each child has their own copy and can follow along.

Literature Review

While there have been many articles, studies and books published about whole language, the whole language teacher and the school media specialist, little has been published about a positive working relationship between public librarians and whole language teachers from the public librarian's point of view. A search of Library and Information Science Abstract, Library Literature, ERIC, Dissertation Abstract, and CATALYST yielded only one article that dealt with whole language and the public librarian. Susan Scheps, in her article "Whole Language in the Public Library: Same As It Ever Was" claims that whole language is not new to the public library and "that our role in the reading process remains unchanged." This researcher



believes that the public librarian's role has changed dramatically in response to teachers who view us as the keepers of the literature that forms the basis of their teaching in the whole language classroom.

Literature that did address the role of the public librarian was written for the whole language teacher, and explained what she could expect from the public library and librarian. Lou Willett Stanek feels that a partnership between whole language teachers and the public librarian is very important and views the public librarian in a positive light. In her book Whole Language: Literature, Learning and Literacy: A Workshop in Print she states the following:

In the best of all possible situations, teachers and librarians have time to brainstorm, plan, and exchange ideas. A librarian will gladly pull good books to support an ocean theme, but as Kate McClelland...said, she would also like to have a chance to tell the teacher about good books she has discovered that could lead to another interesting theme, to suggest follow-up for stories children hear in story hour.

When they help teachers satisfy curriculum needs, librarians also appreciate feedback. Knowing what worked helps them to improve the services they offer. They also appreciate advance notice. The teacher who double-parks while he flies into the library asking for every dinosaur title isn't apt to win teacher of the year votes from the library.

Stanek also recognizes that the role of the librarian is changing as more librarians interact with whole language teachers. She says that when librarians expand their traditional role of storyteller to include facts about the author of a story and how he actually wrote it that the librarian is now the teacher. Some librarians may be uncomfortable in this new role, but this is the future,



it is here now and librarians need to change with the times.
"In the past, the curriculum was the teacher's territorial imperative. What is new is the librarian's role in curriculum planning. Whole language programs rely on a team....They need to serve on curriculum committees."

Goodman and Routman both view the public librarian as a willing partner who will, upon request, supply the teacher with all types of books and materials in the quantity she desires. 8 Librarians must be able to fulfill these requests and still be able to fairly serve other patrons.

Methodology

Survey methodology was used to gather data for this study. A self-administered anonymous questionnaire was mailed to 170 children's librarians working in public libraries in Ohio. A systematic sampling of every fourth public library listed in the <u>Directory of Ohio Libraries</u> was used to determine which librarians would receive the survey. The survey was addressed to the Children's Librarian, since it is children's librarians that work with whole language teachers, not directors or adult reference librarians.

For the purpose of this study it was assumed that teachers and schools in the state of Ohio are adopting whole language curriculums. It was assumed that whole language teachers are placing greater demands on the resources of the public library. It was also assumed that the role of the children's public librarians is changing in response to requests from whole language teachers.



Results

Survey Response

Of the 170 surveys that were mailed 75 were returned, for a return rate of 44%. This percentage was disappointing, but due to time and financial limitations a second mailing was not feasible.

The response from survey participants was very spirited. Ten respondents wrote additional comments that expressed their enthusiasm for whole language. One librarian wrote, "....public libraries need to see that direct involvement with, and support of classroom teachers' efforts to use literature with their classes is benefiting our young patron..." Another wrote, "This is a hot topic and important so librarians need to be involved." Several librarians included their name and phone number so this researcher could speak with them, share their successes, failures, or to just talk with another librarian that shares a common interest, since very little has been published from the librarian's point of view. Librarians want to be part of the educational solution not the problem.

Statistical Results

There was a positive relation between the size of a library's budget and the amounts of materials and services provided by the library. Question 5 asked librarians to check which materials and services



their library provided to teachers. There were 17 choices from which they could choose. When comparing budget size in question 1 and the number of affirmative choices made in question 5, the larger the budget, the more affirmative choices were made. Of libraries with budgets over \$3 million the average number of affirmative choices was 9. Libraries with budgets that ranged from \$1 million to \$2.9 million the mean was 5.6; those with budgets of \$500,000 to \$999,999 the mean of affirmative choices was 3, and libraries with budgets of less than \$500,000 the mean was 2.

Of the responding libraries 4% did not include a budget amount. The response rate of libraries with budgets exceeding \$3 million was 10.6 %; of those with budgets that ranged from \$1 million to \$2.9 million the rate was 17.3%; of those with budgets of between \$500,000 and \$999,999 the rate was 14.6%; of those with budgets of less than \$500,000 the response rate was 52%.

Question 2 determined whether libraries served large or small populations by asking the number of elementary schools in a library's service area. The average number of schools in a service area was 8.5 with a low of 1 and a high of 52.

In question 3 librarians were asked, if to their knowledge, had any of the schools and/or teachers in their service area adopted a whole language literature based curriculum. Three librarians placed a question mark beside this question. They did not explain whether they did not



know what whole language was, or whether they didn't know if the schools in their service areas had adopted whole language or not. Twelve librarians or 16% said that the schools in their service area had not adopted whole language. Fifty-eight librarians or 77.3 % responded that the schools in their service area had adopted a whole language, literature-based curriculum. These figures indicate that the majority of responding librarians are knowledgeable about what is happening in area schools, and have at least a working knowledge of whole language. This response is heartening, since it was not known by this researcher if other librarians had knowledge of, or were interested in issues dealing with whole language, teachers and librarians.

Being knowledgeable about whole language and having whole language schools in a service area does not mean that the majority of librarians are involved in whole language activities. Only 45% of the librarians that answered in the affirmative to question 3 are involved in any whole language activities outside the Library and in conjunction with area schools as defined by the options in question 6.

Question 4 asked librarians to estimate how many times per week elementary school teachers contacted the librarian concerning assignments, used the library as a source for classroom materials, and/or requested help for ideas for themes and expansions of thematic units. The comments that accompanied the responses to this question expressed both a



willingness and desire on the part of the libraian to help teachers and a sense of frustration because of the lack of contact between teachers and librarians. They ranged from, "We are very busy with teachers." to "THEY DON'T DO ANY OF THESE THINGS BUT I'D LIKE TO HELP!" [sic] Several librarians said that they promote their services in the form of assignment alert packets and letters mailed to teachers at the beginning of each school year. One librarian even addresses teachers at in-service meetings at schools in her area and still there is very little response from teachers.

Comments that addressed whether or not teachers checked to see if there were adequate materials to cover class assignments, included: "Lack of schools' communications is a universal problem; we're always surprised." "It very rarely happens." "NEVER!" Of the responding librarians, 74% said teachers never checked to see if there were adequate materials to cover assignments, 17% said teachers checked once a week and only 8% said teachers checked between 2 to 5 times a week.

In response to the option, Do teachers notify you in advance of an assignment, 81% responded with zero times per week; 10% responded 1 time a week; only 8% said teachers checked between 2 and 5 times a week. Comments included: "Rarely." "Very occasionally." "I rarely hear from teachers."

In response to 4-C, Do you use library as a source for classroom materials, the responses were more positive, only



30% responded zero times per week; 70% responded with 1-30 times a week with 3 times per week (23%) the largest response. While teachers do not notify librarians in advance of assignments, they do however use the public library as a source of materials for classroom use. The public library is not used extensively though. This could be because teachers gather materials from their school libraries and/or have built their own classroom libraries.

Options 4-D, 4-E, 4-F dealt with requests for help in assembling, asking for suggestions for subjects and ideas for thematic units and providing ideas that expand units. On average teachers asked for help 5 times a week in assembling materials, 4 times a week for suggesting subjects and ideas for thematic units, and 4 times a week for ideas that would expand and embellish the theme of a unit. Teachers view librarians as valuable resources for help in building thematic units. Librarians expressed a wish that teachers would use them as resource persons even more than they do now. One librarian commented, "I know my collection well and would be more than happy to help teachers find good books to use in theme units."

Question 5 asked librarians to check which materials and services they provided for teachers. Librarians were glad to share the positive results of the services that they provide, but they expressed frustration in their attempts to move beyond the walls of their libraries and to provide services to teachers and students. Many commented that they



would be glad to do more if asked. It seems puzzling, though, that while many librarians want to do more only 45% of them said that they provide programs that explain what whole language materials are available, and what services they provide, both in the library and out in the community. Could it be that we talk a good game, but do very little to try and correct the situation we are lamenting?

Big books are part of the collection in 29% of the libraries that responded, with 17 big books titles being the average per library. One library had as few as 4 and one had over 100. 20% of the libraries had accompanying small books. Of the responding libraries 38.6% had classroom size sets of juvenile fiction. To accommodate the needs of the whole language teacher 38.6% of responding libraries have professional whole language collections.

Bibliographies of specific titles for thematic units were provided by 46.6% of the libraries; 21.3% provided bibliographies of predictable books; 21.3% provided bibliographies of cumulative and circular stories; 24% provided bibliographies of stories that are told in rhyme; 37.3% provided bibliographies of titles grouped by levels of difficulty.

Only 12% of the responding libraries sent book lists of new materials to teachers, or had book-looks of new materials for teachers. A librarian commented that, "I would like to have book looks and send lists to each teacher, but there is no money, however I will occasionally



put a new book list in the local paper." Another librarian shared that she and a teacher/co-worker published a quarterly newsletter for teachers.

Only 13.3% of the responding librarians did in-school programs about authors that students were studying. 25.3% did in-school read-alouds using different versions of the same story. These librarians are changing and expanding their role from that of librarian to that of teacher. One librarian felt that this was the school's job not hers, but others commented that they would be glad to, but they haven't been asked. A surprising 58.6% of librarians did booktalks in schools. These figures indicate that, while librarians provide traditional library activities and services in schools, their role as perceived by themselves has not changed much, but it is ever so slowly changing to meet the needs of the 77.3% of the schools in their service areas that have adopted whole language.

Teachers view the library as a source of information for their students and want them to be familiar with it. They also recognize that librarians are volumble resource people who can help their students. This is evidenced by the fact that 88% of responding librarians said that classes regularly came to the library.

Question 6 asks librarians to respond in the affirmative to activities that they are involved with as a direct result of schools and teachers adopting a whole language curriculum. Only 45% answered in the affirmative to any of



the options. As in question 4, comments by librarians indicated a desire to become involved and they seemed somewhat bitter because they haven't been asked to participate. This sentiment was expressed by one librarian as "HA!" Another stated, "Unfortunately the schools do not consider us or make contacts/invitations in these areas." One librarian was angry and frustrated at the treatment he had received from his local school district. "I attended a meeting in 1991 when whole language was being considered by my district. At the meeting I explained that we did not have lots of multiple copies (not enough \$ or storage), but that we would pull together what we could. I then complied two lists for the Director of Curriculum. I never heard any more from them. I don't mean to sound harsh, but I feel it is up to the schools to approach us if they want our help. After reading an article about whole language and how public librarians are often not consulted, I guess I'm not the only one feeling left-out."

Only 12% of librarians said that they had helped develop a core collection of literature to be used in the classroom. Only 4% of responding librarians were a member of a curriculum committee. Only 13.3% of librarians were on a committee to bring authors to their area.

However 25.3% provided activities that supported and extended thematic units that are being taught in schools. Change is slow in coming but librarians are becoming involved in whole language activities and are taking on



non-traditional roles. One librarian not only works with teachers, but also works closely with the school media specialist. Another stated, "I try to work with the teachers as much as possible. While not asked to do any [options in question 6] I want to, and I encourage teachers to use my library and to please include me."

Question 7 dealt with lending procedures. This question generated the most comments. From these comments two very different attitudes emerged. Either the librarian was willing to cooperate with teachers and allowed them special privileges or teachers were viewed as the enemy, who tried to take advantage of their status. Comments ranged from "Same day service, and no limit on subject matter." to "Teachers are always abusing every privilege we give them."

Even though some librarians view teachers negatively, lending polices for teachers are liberal. In fact 97.3% of the responding librarians will gather material in response to a phone request, with only 58% of them requiring advance notice to gather the materials requested. The average length of advance notice required is 4.5 days, with 2 hours being the shortest length of time required and 14 days being the longest. In response to whether or not librarians will check the availability of items over the phone, 74% replied that they would. Here again, even though two librarians complained that "teachers want me to check a whole list and they don't seem to care that I may be busy with other patrons," the average number of items librarians are willing



to check over the phone is 8. Thirty-two librarians did not have a set limit and would call the teacher back if the library was busy.

In response to the option, do you limit the number of items a teacher may borrow on any one subject or author 44% did impose a limit, but more than half, 56% did not impose a limit. One librarian stated that "teachers are doing their best to teach children under adverse financial conditions so I must allow them access to as many materials as possible." In support of teachers, 78.6% of librarians allow teachers to borrow multiple copies of one title. While three librarians discouraged this practice because of the size of their collections, three others allowed teachers to borrow up to 10 copies of one title. Two librarians stated that they buy multiple copies of books that are on whole language book lists. To meet the demand for multiple copies of books needed in the whole language classroom, Medina County District Library has developed Children's Opportunities for Reading Enrichment (CORE). Teachers may borrow multiple copies of a title for up to four weeks. Cuyahoga County Public Library has developed Project Read.

In response to the option, do you allow an extended loan period for teachers, 73% of responding librarians answered that they did. The length of the average loan period was 5.5 weeks. Four librarians allow teachers to have materials as long as they need them. Librarians are aware of the fact that in a whole language classroom real literature, both



fiction and informational is used as parts of thematic units and as a result teachers need materials for an extended length of time to complete the unit.

57% of libraries will renew items over the phone. One library will renew items over the phone only for teachers. Of responding librarians, 65% charge fines for overdue materials. Of those libraries that charge fines 16% do not charge teachers fines during the school year.

Conclusions

As evidenced by the results of this study, children's public librarians are knowledgeable about whole language. They are aware that teachers who use whole language in their classrooms require good literature for thematic units and that great amounts of materials and resources are needed by teachers to successfully help children learn. Although some librarians grumble and complain about teachers, most view teachers as potential allies in the education of children.

Librarians view themselves as having much to give to whole language teachers and are frustrated that teachers have little contact with them and don't use them as a whole language resource person.

The role of the public librarian is slowly changing as more schools adopt whole language, literature-based curriculums. Some librarians are frustrated at the slow rate of this change. If librarians wish to accelerate and bring about more changes in their role as educators, have



increased contact with whole language teachers and become active partners in the education of children, they must aggressively bring about this change themselves rather than waiting to be asked by teachers. It is indicated from many of the comments on returned surveys that librarians want to assume a different role, but are waiting to be asked. can't wait. Librarians must make contact and teachers must be made aware that librarians can provide a wealth of information about children's literature in general and their own collection in particular. Librarians are, after all the keepers of the literature that forms the foundation of whole language. One librarian is making contact, she commented, "I am going to be a speaker at Bowling Green's Annual Education Conference. Subject: "Who's On First?: Cooperation Between Teacher & Librarian." I am new at our library and have implemented various policies that will eventually bring about a better relationship between library and school." Hopefully other librarians will follow her lead.



APPENDIX A

Wha	t is the yearly budget of your library?
	Over \$3,000,000 \$1,000,000 to \$2,999,999 \$500,000 to \$999,999 less than \$500,000
How are	many elementary schools are within your library's service a?
	your knowledge, have any of these schools and/or teachers pted a whole language, literature-based curriculum?
	yes no
Est	imate the average number of times per week elementary teachers:
	Check to see if you have adequate materials to cover a class assignment. Notify you in advance of a class assignment. Use the library as a source for classroom materials. Request your help in assembling materials for thematic units. (i.e. Fiction & informational materials relating to a particular subject or author.) Request your help in suggesting subjects and ideas for the themes of such units. Request your help in providing ideas that will expand and embellish the thematic unit they are preparing Other (please explain)
	eck the following materials and services which your library ovides for teachers:
	Big books; number of titles Accompanying small books; number of copies per title Classroom-size sets of juvenile fiction. Professional whole language collection. Bibliographies of specific titles for thematic units. Bibliographies of predictable books. Bibliographies of cumulative and circular stories. Bibliographies of stories that are told in rhyme. Bibliographies of books grouped by levels of difficulty. Send lists of new titles to teachers. Book-looks of new titles for teachers.



	Programs explaining what services the library provides and what whole language materials are available.
6.	Check any of the following activities that you are involved in as the direct result of schools and/or teachers adopting a whole language curriculum:
	Helped develop a core collection of literature to be used in the classroom. Are a member of a curriculum committee. Are a member of a committee to bring authors to area schools. Support and extend thematic units being used in the classroom by providing related activities after school or as part of a class visit. Other (please explain)
7.	Gather materials on a subject in response to a phone request. Limit the number of items a teacher may borrow on any one subject or author. Teachers may borrow multiple copies of one title. (Not packaged as a classroom set.) Allow an extended loan period; Length of loan Renew items over the phone. Charge fines for overdue materials. Require advance notice to gather materials; Amount of advance notice Check the availability of items over the phone. How many items will you check over the phone? Other (please explain)



APPENDIX B

School of Library and Information Science (216) 672-2782 Fax 216 672-7965



May 3, 1993

Assessing the Role of the Children's Public Librarian with the Whole Language Teacher as Patron

Dear Children's Librarian:

I am a graduate student at Kent State University, in the process of completing my Master of Library Science degree. As one of the requirements for completion of my degree I am researching the role of the librarian in regard to the services and materials she provides to the teacher who has adopted a whole language, literature-based curriculum.

You are under no obligation to participate and your anonymity will be preserved. Only the library name will be used for record keeping.

Enclosed you will find a questionnaire with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Please complete the questionnaire and return it by May 17, 1993. Every response is important and each reply will make the results of survey more meaningful. It is my hope that the results of this study will help clarify and resolve some of the paradoxes librarians face in regard to providing materials and services to teachers. If you are interested in the results of the survey please enclose a SASE with the completed questionnaire and I will mail you the results by August 31, 1993.

If you want to know more about this research project, please call me at (216) 255-3287; or Dr. Carolyn Brodie at (216) 672-2782. If you have questions about Kent State University's rules for research, please call Eugene Wenninger at (216) 672-2070.

Your participation is greatly appreciated; thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Deborah W. Anderson

8110 Deepwood Blvd. C-24

Mentor, Ohio 44060

encl.



NOTES

¹Lou Willett Stanek, "Whole Language: A Movement Out of Sync," School Library Journal 39 (March 1993): 112.

²Lou Willett Stanek, <u>Whole Language: Literature, Learning and Literacy: A Workshop in Print</u> (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1993) 9.

³Linda Leonard Lamme and Linda Ledbetter, "Libraries: The Heart of Whole Language," <u>Language Arts</u> 67 (November 1990): 736.

⁴Regie Routman, <u>Transitions: From Literature to Literacy</u> (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1988) 57.

⁵Susan Scheps, "Whole Language in the Public Library: Same as It Ever Was," <u>School Library Journal</u> 37 (July 1991): 27.

⁶Stanek, <u>Whole Language</u>, 13.

⁷Ibid., 33.

⁸Ken Goodman, <u>What's Whole in Whole Language?</u> (New York: Scholastic, 1986)

Regie Routman, <u>Invitations: Changing as Teachers and Learners K-12</u> (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991) 448.



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